

THE PROFESSIONAL MINISTRY OF
WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Senior Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Episcopal Theological School
Cambridge, Massachusetts

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

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April 1964

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I began the study of this subject assuming that few of my fellow students would be interested in it. The pleasant surprise was that my assumption was wrong. In the course of the year I discussed it with many members of the student body. They were tremendously helpful in sharpening my ideas and many of them were alert to books and articles that I never would have located without their help. In particular I am indebted to Mrs. Robert A. Rodenmayer for her help in narrowing the topic and for her provision of otherwise unavailable material; to The Rev. Charles E. Lange for his endless interest in finding new material and for sharing his knowledge of Richard Hooker; to Suzanne Hiatt for her constant interest and keen perception of the issues; and to Peter Williams for his insistence that I have the courage of my convictions; may he never regret it.

INTRODUCTION

The Christian Church is in need of giving much study and thought to the subject of the place of professional women church workers. Particularly in the Episcopal Church there is need for such thought and study because it has been a much neglected subject in the past. At present the Episcopal Church has no reliable facts and figures on the laity working professionally in the Church because no records have been required by the individual dioceses. We have only the vaguest ideas about numbers of persons employed and in what capacities. Fortunately, some important steps have been taken by The Rev. Robert N. Rodenmayer, Secretary of the Division of Christian Ministries of the National Council and Mrs. Robert N. Rodenmayer, Associate Secretary of the Division of Christian Ministries. In particular, Mrs. Rodenmayer is supervising the launching of a full scale survey of professional women workers in the Episcopal Church. This survey will begin early in the summer of 1964 and will be finished in 1965. Hopefully this study will provide us with information which will enable us to evaluate the present situation and make strategic plans for the future. Also a resolution will be placed before the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in September, 1964, which, if passed, will establish a definite canonical relationship between bishops and the professional lay people working in their dioceses. This resolution should have far reaching effects in the training,

placement, supervision, and moral support of professional lay workers.

One of the problems that immediately confronts a study of professional women workers in the Church is the difficulty in defining just what a professional woman Church worker is. Is it the mere fact that she is employed by the Church? In this case we would include directors of Christian Education, college workers, secretaries, nurses, social workers, teachers, deaconesses, nuns, sisters in the Church Army, officers and employees of the National Council, the provinces and the dioceses. Such a definition is too wide to be useful to this study for two reasons:

1. Many of the jobs these people are doing would vary very little from the jobs they would be doing if they were employed by organizations other than the Church.

2. The "professional" category is generally recognized to include people with a college education and additional accredited professional training. We shall conform to this generally accepted use of "professional" to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. The following criteria shall be used to define a professional woman church worker.*

1. Has graduated from college and has had one or two years of graduate study.

*This definition applies also to men working professionally for the Church.

2. Is employed by the Church or by a Church related institution or agency.

3. Is salaried and able to be fired.

4. Whose work is primarily religious or theological, be it as a teacher, administrator, evangelist or pastor.¹

This would include directors of Christian Education, college workers, national, provincial, diocesan or parochial administrators, deaconesses, Church Army sisters, social workers, and teachers in Church related schools or institutions who are teaching specifically religious courses. These criteria do not include secretaries and nurses, for example, whose work for the Church would not differ appreciably from their work for other institutions. It also excludes nuns and other members of religious societies whose membership in those societies would prevent them from being paid or fired. Members of a religious community as such are invulnerable to the professional policing that everyone else is vulnerable to. Thus they cannot be considered to be professional in the same sense. This is not to infer that the standards they set for themselves are not professional since many religious are doing work of a very high professional caliber. These criteria also exclude women working for other organizations who none the less feel that their jobs are their Christian vocations. And of course we would hope that all baptized Christians would see their jobs in this light. These criteria and the definition of a professional woman Church

worker that they frame are not meant to be final and unyielding. It is only meant to be a working definition for this thesis. And in the course of this study we will frequently consider persons and positions technically outside of the definition. These formalities are for the sake of clarity alone. Nothing could be further from my purpose than to recommend unchanging categories and functions. It will be noted above that both the terms "professional women workers" and "professional lay people" have been used. This has been done quite deliberately since some of the issues about professional women workers in the church exist in the distinction between lay ministers and ordained ministers and other issues exist in the distinction between women and men. These issues will be discussed at length below.

Actually this thesis is not about professional women church workers as a particular group or function within the church. Rather it is about the much broader subject indicated in the title of the thesis, the professional ministry of women in the church. This is not meant to be a subtle distinction to confound the wise but to indicate that the whole subject of women having a professional ministry in the church is larger than what directors of Christian Education and college workers are doing or should be doing. It involves not only a description of the professional ministry of women in the past and in the present, but also a treatment of what this ministry should be

in the future. It is impossible to adequately deal with this topic without treating the subject of the ordination of women to the priesthood. The reason it is necessary to treat this subject is that the church has fallen into the habit of thinking that the priesthood is the logical form of professional service for the Christian male and that Christian Education is the logical form of service for the Christian female. Both assumptions are open to grave question on theological grounds and on sociological and psychological grounds. And as we examine these assumptions today we find that the situation is infinitely more complicated than ever before. No one single argument or avenue of investigation will do justice to the complexities before us.

The issues and problems involved can be seen in the changing relationships between, (1) women and men in society, (2) the laity and the priesthood, and (3) the Church and society. Furthermore it involves such theological issues as, (1) the authority of scripture and tradition in the doctrine and polity of the church, (2) the doctrine of the ministry, (3) the theology of the laity, and (4) the missionary task of the church in the world today. I have chosen to deal with these larger questions in relation to the professional ministry of women in the church rather than the apparently more closely related questions for the following reasons.

1. A great deal of specific literature has already been written on the subject of women in the church.

2. Great debate and change can be expected in the areas above in the coming decades.

3. Thus any study of the professional ministry of women in the church that is going to be helpful in thinking for the future must relate this subject to all these areas of controversy and change.

FOOTNOTES

1. These criteria are adapted from the criteria for membership in the Association of Professional Women Church Workers, an organization officially recognized by the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church. The fact that no such organization exists for professional laymen indicates the unfortunate lack of such persons.

CHAPTER I

A SURVEY OF WOMEN'S PLACE IN SOCIETY AND THE CHURCH PRIOR TO 1900.

The professional ministry of women in the church is an issue which has been the cause of much debate and feeling in recent years. It is a subject which has been approached from many perspectives and points of view. For many people it means directors of Christian Education and for others it means women priests or priestesses. Until the turn of the century, with the emancipation of women and the increased numbers of educated and professional women, there was never even the glimmer of such a problem in the Episcopal Church. There was not even the possibility of such a topic of discussion. The situation is quite different now - different, and extremely complicated. In order to clarify this complicated situation the place of women will be considered in historic perspective and in relation to certain situations and social institutions.

I. In Society Prior to 1900.

The position of women in western society prior to 1900 is so entirely different from their position today as to almost defy comparison. With the exception of widows, virgins, deaconesses and nuns, there were very few women doing any particular work outside their homes. And even in the cases of widows,

virgins, deaconesses and nuns, most of their work involved nursing, midwifery, visiting the poor, and supervising the baptism of women.¹ Deaconesses were active in a teaching role in the Eastern Church between the fourth and ninth century but this is the one exception.² The women who are honored as saints today were persecuted in their times for exercising their vocations. Not only were women's activities outside the home frowned upon, if not positively forbidden, but they were almost a physical impossibility because of the heavy burdens of housework and the bearing and care of children demanded all their time and energy. And because the circumstances of life were much more physically demanding and dangerous it was not safe for women to venture into society. The point here is that prior to the time of the American frontier and the industrial revolution when women's work was needed in the world, we have a pattern of women's place in society which differs as night from day from the situation we live in today. The women who were active in church life as widows, virgins, deaconesses, and nuns were not only the exceptions to the rule but were not independently active in society. In particular, widows and virgins were often treated like charity cases who ought to be allowed to do something to earn their way on the charity roles of the church.

It was not only the physical circumstances that prevented women from being active in society. It was the male assumption that women were under subjection to men, that their place was to

serve and obey men in all things. This assumption was manifested on two levels - the pagan and sub-Christian level, and the theological level. And I think that it is important that we examine each of these levels with great care. We shall deal most extensively with the pagan notions about women here and only briefly with the theological assumptions about women, since we shall treat the theological issues at greater length at a later point in this study.

II. Simone de Beauvoir

Simone de Beauvoir deals with the pagan, sub-Christian assumptions in her magnificent psychological and sociological work, The Second Sex.³ I think it important to look at her work because it is a most important work on the place of women in society and because it is free of all ecclesiastical and theological assumptions. Why is it, she asks, that women are treated like a minority race when they comprise half or more of the population? Why is it that being a man is a positive or neutral thing, when being a women is a negative thing? What is sexuality all about when it is separated from the differentiated functions of reproduction? She takes great length to demonstrate that psychology, biology, and economics show that the mental capacities of men and women are very much the same and that while men are stronger muscularly, women have more physical and emotional endurance. There is no scientific explanation why women should be considered inferior or why all decision making power should be

relegated to men.

De Beauvoir holds that the reason for this discriminating attitude against women is directly connected with the seemingly mysterious power of child bearing and its subsequent practical curse. By the mysterious power of child birth she means that men are in wonder and awe at the fact of child birth. For primitive man this female capacity to reproduce offspring and thus insure the continuation of the race gave woman a magical power. This reverence of man for woman is reflected in ancient religions in which the divine figure is a goddess. On the other hand the female capacity to bear children is also a curse. First, it is a curse because one more child means one more mouth to feed. Second, the mother is not available to work in the fields and to hunt. Third, all her energies are turned to the care and nurture of children which means that her concentration is on the products of her body rather than on objects outside herself in the world. Thus she becomes the captive of her body and its functions. This captivity and limitation is the basis for her subjection to men. Fear and awe of her reproductive powers coupled with the limiting burdens of child care comprise the ambivalent feelings of awe and superiority that men have felt toward women since the beginning of human life. This is Simone de Beauvoir's answer to her question, why is female sexuality disdained and discriminated against. Certainly these dynamics between men and women have become more

sophisticated and less blatant with the development of culture and society. But the same basic patterns continue.

Furthermore, de Beauvoir shows in her study that many of the characteristics which are usually considered to be masculine or feminine are socially learned modes of behavior and are not inherent characteristics. The actual sexual differences between men and women are not as great as we have wanted to think. This is a somewhat unsettling thought at first. But it is a thesis that has been born out in the past 75 years as we have seen women do many things that were previously thought to be impossible for them. De Beauvoir's appeal is that men and women think of one another as persons and human beings primarily and as sexual beings secondarily.

Many Americans have tried to discount de Beauvoir's thesis by saying that American women are much happier being women than European women are and that her thesis doesn't apply to American women. This objection is difficult to prove and it smacks of the very kind of male defensiveness and superiority that she is opposed to. Personally I support her thesis because I think it is a most simple and inclusive explanation of the phenomenon of discrimination that exists. Furthermore, her scientific presuppositions are ones which a Christian can and should support. Namely, she presupposes that unless inferiority can be demonstrated concretely, treating women as inferior beings is nothing short of unjust discrimination.

III. Traditional Theological Treatment

Theological treatment and ecclesiastical concern with the place of women in the church has been slight in the history of the church. Women who were accorded any status in the life of the church are the exceptions to the rule. Until the twentieth century the only significantly favorable theological evaluation of women's place in the church was accorded by the Society of Friends, which insisted that women take an active role in the decisions and work of the meetings.

From their earliest beginning the Friends not only allowed but expected their women members to participate fully in every possibility (and danger) borne by men.⁴

The general Christian attitude toward women prior to the twentieth century was a strange mixture of chivalry and disdain. The whole topic of the real meaning and nature of medieval chivalry is too complicated to discuss here. But what we do know from scholars⁵ is that the formalities of honor and devotion that knights showed to their ladies were masks for feelings that were far more hostile and dishonorable than appearances allowed. Specific theological statements on the place of women in the church are few in number. Thomas Aquinas said that women were incapable of receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands because they were incapacitated by the Fall.

Even though a woman were made the object of all that is done in conferring Orders, she would not receive Orders; for since a sacrament is a sign, not only the thing, the significance of the thing, is required in all sacramental action. Thus it was stated above that in Extreme Unction it is necessary to have a sick man, in order to signify the need of healing. Accordingly, since it is not possible in the female sex to signify eminence of degree, for a woman is the state of subjection, it follows that⁶ she cannot receive the sacrament of Orders.

St. Chrysostom said that "Women are a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril and a painted ill."⁷ It is unfortunate that these are the most well known theological statements in the tradition of classical theology. It is unfortunate because these statements are flattering neither to women or to their male authors. Theological work on this subject today is on a much higher level of scholarly endeavor. In most cases scripture is appealed to as the final authority and as is the case whenever scripture is appealed many different points are proven. We shall discuss the various contemporary theological positions on the place and the professional ministry of women in the Church at a later point in this study.

IV. Summary

A. In western society prior to the American frontier, the Industrial Revolution, and the Emancipation of Women, there were very few women who had any independent life outside their

homes and families. Their position in society and in the church was strictly subordinated to men.

B. The sources of this subordination of women reach far back into the experience of civilized man and center in the ambivalent feelings men have toward women's capacity to bear children. There has always been more myth and superstition about the nature of sexuality than there have been facts. Sex has often been the excuse for not treating people as persons of dignity and ultimate worth.

C. Classical Christian theology has not dealt very creatively or extensively with the subject of women. This lack of theological concern only tends to affirm the validity of the two points above.

FOOTNOTES

1. Kathleen Bliss, The Service and Status of Women in the Churches, (London: S C M Press Limited, 1952), p. 18.
2. Ibid., p. 15.
3. Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, translated by H. M. Parshley, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957).
4. Bliss, p. 22.
5. See particularly Johan Huizinga, The Wanning of the Middle Ages, (London: Arnold, 1924).
6. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Part III, Supplement Q XXXIX, quoted in Robert W. Howard, Should Women Be Priests? (Oxford: Basil Blackwell and Mott, Limited, 1949).
7. Bliss, p. 17.

CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY SINCE 1900

As was noted in the previous chapter the status¹ and place of women in society and the church is markedly different in the twentieth century than in any other century. Actually the date 1900 is arbitrary and a bit late since the famous suffragettes were active from the middle of the nineteenth century on.* The first Women's Rights Convention in the world was held in Seneca Falls, New York, July 19, 1848. But it was not until August 26, 1920 that the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was proclaimed giving suffrage to women. This emancipation of women was both proclaimed and denounced in the name of Christianity. This is just one clear instance of how confused and divided the Christian Church is on the whole issue of the place of women.² Many times again we will see both freedom and subjugation proclaimed in the name of the Gospel. As was said above there is no single date that marks the arrival of women's independence in American society.⁺ While higher education was opened to women in the 1830's and 1840's it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that it was considered

* Susan B. Anthony: 1820-1906; Elizabeth Cady Stanton: 1816-1882; Lucy Stone: 1818-1893.¹

⁺ Some would say that this is because such independence has not yet been achieved.

at all respectable for young ladies to work as secretaries in business establishments. Of course, economic necessity had dictated that women in the lower classes work long hard hours for little pay from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. But this was not freedom; it was necessity. During World War I women were needed in business and industry. Following the war women were much more socially free than they had been previously. But professional women were still very few in number and very low in esteem. Toward the end of the inter-war period career girls became more socially acceptable. They even became the heroines of short stories in women's magazines.³ With World War II the man-power shortage called women into work in all walks of life, and necessity gave their work respectability and honor. I think it fair to say that it was World War II that finally confirmed the place of women in business, politics and the professions. Necessity had confirmed the words of those who had said that women were capable and reliable. Many old superstitions had been disproven more conclusively than ever before.

Since World War II the number of women going to college has increased as has the number of women working after they are married and have families. From a quick look at society it seems that women have more opportunity to realize their aims and interests than ever before. But a closer look shows that everything is not as progressive and forward looking as it seems. The

vast majority of women college graduates are suburban housewives who have worked only several years, if at all.⁴ Few of them feel that they ought to use their education in the world in any formal way, except through volunteer work. They feel that their whole lives gain total meaning from their husbands and their children and that to expect anything else from life is somehow just not right. "There are few Noras left in contemporary American society because women have deluded themselves that the doll's house is large enough to find complete personal fulfillment within it." Marriage is viewed as the ultimate goal in life and many costly sacrifices are made for it in intellectual cultivation and fulfillment.

The feminine mystique permits, even encourages, women to ignore the question of their identity. The mystique says they can answer the question "Who am I?" by saying "Tom's wife...Mary's mother." But I don't think the mystique would have such power over American women if they did not fear to face this terrifying blank which makes them unable to see themselves after twenty-one. The truth is - and how long it has been true, I'm not sure, but it was true in my generation and it is true of girls growing up today - an American woman no longer has a private image to tell her who she is, or can be, or wants to be.⁶

We are just now beginning to see the results of this post-war swing to the home. Women who seemingly have everything they could want are tired, listless and angry. Betty Frieden has called it "The Problem that Has no name". They are bored with the routine they are in but do not dare to get out of it. They are afraid to say that they are disappointed with life and

certain psychologists and social scientists only reinforce their guilt feelings by telling them that they must adjust to their roles as wives and mothers.⁷ The quest for security in marriage and parenthood that engulfed everyone after World War II has back-fired in our faces. "The Home" turned out not to be the warm escape from Wall Street, The Bomb and the CIO-AFL that we thought it would be. And the slogan "the Family that prays together stays together" has not proved to be too reliable as church membership and the divorce rate have climbed together.

What was thought to be the ideal of American living has turned out to be a trap, and we are just beginning to see why. Put in the most stark and simple terms, we were content to live in roles rather than in human personalities. College women have allowed themselves to be dragged into the Senior panic to get married. And men have had their egos puffed with the illusion that they are providing their wives with everything they could possibly want - sex, children, and a house in the suburbs, to say nothing of love - the kind of love that comforts rather than strengthens. I have stated this situation as bluntly and one sidedly as possible because at the present time this side needs to be heard and forced into the thoughts and conversations of many people. I am well aware that all college women and suburban housewives are not frustrated neurotics. But there is a great deal of neurosis in the ideal American life pattern and it is time for us all to take responsibility for it and help to heal

the people and the situation involved. Unfortunately, American Protestantism has approved of and encouraged this pattern. This is not an unexpected occurrence since the Church has often confused Christianity with conservatism in family, social, and political relations. This tendency toward conservatism is a fact which bears much thought and consideration - more than is directly relevant at this point in this study. Suffice it to say that this tendency toward conservatism plays an important part in many of the difficulties encountered in advancing a more varied and self-fulfilling* life for American women and particularly in advancing a greater place for the professional ministry of women in the church.

The situation that women find themselves in today is a great deal more complex than ever before. There is no one point of view on what their place in society should be. There are many points of view which often conflict with one another and which are often ambiguously held by the same individual at the same time. Having already treated one aspect of the problem, the emphasis on home and family since World War II, I shall discuss the other aspects of this complex situation.

First, in spite of the changes in the place of women in society in the last century, there is still a residue of feeling

* It can be legitimately argued that the self-fulfillment is not the goal of Christian vocation. But certainly self-fulfillment should result from true Christian vocation as opposed to conforming to a role.

that resembles the patriarchal and pagan ideas discussed in Chapter One. Today this view takes the form of dismissing women as being irrational, undependable, weak, and concerned only with the more frivolous (clothes, parties, social status, etc.) and physical (home, food, children and sex) aspects of human existence. Furthermore, women are seen as being hot tempered, hard to please, and untrustworthy. This point of view does not have nearly the popularity it did a hundred years ago and even those who hold it today would hesitate to express it. Such a view is contrary to democratic, enlightened, twentieth century American ideals and thus they are very unpopular in the public conscience. The difficult problem is that many men do hold some of these patriarchal views but are embarrassed that they do. Thus they are unable to talk about these feelings honestly, and the prejudice, distrust, and hostility only continues unrelieved.

Second, women have not endured this subjugation altogether silently or docilely. Some women have accepted their "inferior" status with a kind of quiet obedience and despiration. Others have struck out aggressively and bitterly. But the vast majority have resorted to a careful and subtle manipulation of their men (be they sons or husbands) and by a certain kind of "sweet reason" they have intimidated many men into spending their entire lives seeking the success that will make their mothers and wives happy. The battle of the sexes is still going on, but

the worse part about the battle is that it is going underground.

The third aspect of the situation is our intense concern with masculinity and femininity. Certain branches of psychology have made us so exclusively concerned with our sexuality and how it is relating to everyone else's sexuality that we do not have time to be concerned with persons and individuals. We have been led to stereotype relationships into masculine and feminine roles and masculine and feminine characteristics. Much of our knowledge about sexuality has come to be used in popular psychology as a way of avoiding asking the more profound questions about the nature of man and his life on this planet. Fortunately the professional psychologists, psychiatrists, and social scientists have seen the limitations of sex-centered personality theories, but the general public is still being deluged daily with sexual stereotypes as the key to success.⁸

But there are some very healthy and positive factors at work which lead us to believe that the kind of misunderstanding and tension outlined in the three points above are not the final state of the situation. The first is the basic American respect for equality and democracy. As often as these principles are violated they remain in the public mind and they can be called forth if the call is loud and clear. The second is that the social scientists are doing an increasingly fine job of bringing the problem to the public. The appearance of Betty Friedan's, The Feminine Mystique and the Spring, 1964 issue of Daedalus are

bringing these issues to the public mind. We can only hope that people will listen to these prophets. The third source of health is the Christian understanding of human life, sin, and new life. The gospel of Jesus Christ is that we can repent our sins against one another and that in Christ we are made whole and reconciled with one another. The new freedom in Christ to be truly human can enable us to grant that same measure of freedom to one another. Altogether too often we think of duty as being the most important part of Christian love and Christian marriage. But the true grace of love in Christian relationships is the freedom we can give to one another. Were our relationships not dead in sin we would know that this freedom was never ours to deny another in the first place. Through grace and love we can allow ourselves to consider people as persons and as individuals first rather than as aggregates of masculine or feminine characteristics.⁹

This then is the complex picture of women in American society since 1900. It may seem to some that this discussion of the relationships between men and women in the period since World War II is beside the point in a study of the professional ministry of women in the church. But I am convinced by the literature on women in the church and by the numerous discussions I have had with people on this subject that these social and psychological issues play a much greater part in a person's views on the subject than do any theological considerations.

This confused picture of the place of women in the world is the most immediate context in which discussions on the professional ministry of women in the church take place. And any realistic study of this subject must recognize that this is the context in which we are all standing.

In view of this it stands to reason that the first task of the Christian Church is to speak to the greater problem of men and women in relation to one another in all situations and only secondly in professional service in the church. I have briefly indicated the Good News that can be preached to all men and women who face the tensions of their inter-personal relations. Only in Christ can we be made whole and at one with one another. Only in him can we know who we truly are. Only his grace will enable us to live honestly and truthfully in situations we would much prefer to avoid. In the years to come the Christian Church must be increasingly aware that it must speak these words of love and reconciliation loudly and clearly. Traditional platitudes about the relationship between men and women will not suffice. Rather the church must be on the growing edge of the coming social changes since these changes will take place whether or not the church approves. Hopefully the church will be on this growing edge so that it can tell all people that their true humanity is in Jesus Christ.

FOOTNOTES

1. An Encyclopedia of World History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1940).

2. Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: W. W. North and Company, Inc., 1963) pp. 84, 339-346.,

3. Ibid., pp. 32-35.

4. Esther Peterson, "Working Women", pp. 671-699; and Alice S. Rossi, "Equality Between the Sexes: An Immodest Proposal," pp. 607-652. Daedalus, Spring, 1964.

5. Rossi, Ibid., p. 608.

6. Friedan, p. 64.

7. Rossi, p. 611.

8. Friedan, Chapters II and VI.

9. Rossi, p. 608.

CHAPTER III

THE PROFESSIONAL MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH: DEBATE AND DISCUSSION SINCE 1900.

In the last chapter we noted that the place of women in society has developed in several stages and directions in the past century. The same is true of discussions on the place of women in the Church. As has been mentioned previously, the Church is often behind society in appropriating social change within its life and work. Such is the case with the Church in relationship to the work of the women suffragettes and the Emancipation of women in 1920. But eventually people within the Church were forced to recognize that the Christian ministry was the only professional field still closed to women and this exclusion was challenged. Interestingly enough, there are two phases of discussion of this subject. The first phase starts at the beginning of the century and centers in the Anglican Church. The second phase begins after World War II in response to (1) the changing role of women in society during and because of the war, (2) the concern of the World Council of Churches which led to a massive questionnaire, two reports, and a full length book.¹ The interest generated by the World Council led to a great deal of independent study and debate in the individual denominations.

In this chapter we shall attempt to present a summary view of these two phases of concern and debate and to summarize the areas of tension and disagreement. It will not be the purpose of this chapter to evaluate the soundness of each of the proposals and discussions. That will be the task of a later chapter. Furthermore, this chapter in no way will attempt to deal exhaustively with the history of these debates and discussions. Rather it will try to deal representatively with the kind of thinking that has been going on.²

These debates and discussions have centered on the subject of the ordination of women to the ministry rather than the more general topic of the professional ministry of women in the Church. The reasons for this are fairly apparent. First, the role of the priest, minister, or pastor (whichever title is preferred) has come to be regarded as the most significant position of Christian service in the church. Whether this view is correct or not is not the issue. The fact remains that we usually expect committed young men to go into the ministry if they are really serious about their religion. Thus the ministry is a position of status and any discussion of the status of women in the church will inevitably turn to the question of the ordination of women at some point. Second, aside from any subjective factors, the ordained ministry is the means through which the Christian Gospel is most directly and explicitly preached. Thus any person, man or woman, will naturally consider

the possibility of the ministry as being the way in which they can most effectively witness to their faith.

In the Church of England, and thus consequently in the rest of the bodies in the Anglican Communion, the chief foci of concern have been in the revival of the Order of Deaconesses and the discussions of the ordination of women to the priesthood. The Archbishops' Committee reported on the ministry of women in the Church of England in 1919 and made specific recommendations concerning the service and status of deaconesses.³ This report received much support and approval at the Lambeth Conference in 1920 and subsequently definite action was taken in 1923 and 1925 in the Convocations of Canterbury and York respectively. At the recommendation of the Lambeth Conference in 1930 the Archbishops' Commission studied the problem further. The report of this Commission in 1935⁴ remains the most important official word on the subject in the Anglican Communion to the present day. The Order of Deaconesses also received more extensive definition in this report - their education, ordination, duties, and discipline.

This Order should not be regarded as equivalent with the diaconate of men, but rather as the one existing Holy Order for women. We think that a service for the ordination of a deaconess should be included along with the other ordination services in the Ordinal. We are of opinion that the functions of the deaconess should include the right by authorisation of the bishop (i) to read the services of Morning and Evening Prayer and the Litany, except for those portions reserved to the priest, and to lead prayer, (ii) to instruct and preach, except at the service of Holy Communion,

(iii) to officiate at the Churching of Women, (iv) in the absence of the priest to baptise infants, and (v) where there may be special need, as for instance in girls' schools and women's colleges, to administer the chalice.⁵

In the period 1920-1940 the number of deaconesses increased in the Church of England and their status was somewhat improved. William Temple was particularly responsible for bringing the importance of their ministry to the public mind. But their position remains an ambiguous one of being neither clergy nor laity.

The Report also contains recommendations on the education and work of lay women workers.

We think that lay women should be eligible for all such offices and duties in the Church as are open to lay men, including that of lay reader; that authority should be given to some to preach, to take occasional services and to conduct retreats.⁶

But primarily the Report is concerned with the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood. As can be seen from a reading of the Report, the members of the Commission heard the points of view of many men and women on this subject. They engaged in serious biblical study, historical investigation, and theological debate. And in general it can be said that their views represent a very open, informed, and liberal segment of the Anglican Communion. In fact my impression of this document is that it represents some of the best liberal Anglican thinking on the whole subject.

The Gospels show us that our Lord regarded men and women alike as members of the same spiritual kingdom, as children of God's family and as possessors of the same spiritual capacities. Women were freely accepted as our Lord's disciples and ministered to His needs. Therefore from the first the place of women in the Christian community was assured, but it remained, and indeed still remains, necessary to discover and determine how they may best share in the work and mission of the Church.⁷

The question the Commission wrestled with was,

Is the office of priesthood one that it is impossible for a woman to fill; or, without decision on the possibility of a woman exercising a valid priesthood, is there any binding principle of a theological nature, on the basis of which it is right to continue the exclusion of women from the priesthood?⁸

In examining the particular theological argument advanced against the ordination of women through the history of the Church the Commission found that these arguments were generally not convincing. Such arguments that they rejected were as follows.

1. God is referred to by the masculine rather than feminine pronoun.⁹
2. Jesus took the form of a man rather than a woman.¹⁰
3. The sex of the priest must be the same as the sex of Christ.¹¹
4. The ordination of women is contrary to the will of the Holy Spirit.¹²

Nevertheless, the Commission came to the conclusion that women ought not be admitted to the three Orders of Ministers at the present time. Its reasons were as follows.

1. The admission of a woman to one of these offices of ministers is neither suggested nor contemplated in the preface to the ordination services contained in the Book of Common Prayer.¹³

2. We believe that the general mind of the Church is still in accord with the continuous tradition of a male priesthood. It is our conviction that this consensus of tradition and opinion is based upon the will of God and is, for the Church of to-day, a sufficient witness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are therefore of the opinion that the case for a change in the Church's rule has not been made out.¹⁴

3. It is highly doubtful that the other bodies in Catholic Christendom would feel that the Anglican branch had the right "to make so great a change in respect to the ministry of Christ's Church." While some would argue that the three Orders of Ministers are not essential to the faith of the Christian Church, many would disagree. And the Church of England does not want to give these bodies any reason to doubt that she "is part of the Catholic Church of Christ."¹⁵ Briefly, the Church of England would not want the issue of the ordination of women to jeopardize the possibilities of the eventual reunion of Christendom.

This summarizes the important points contained in the Report of the Archbishops' Commission on the ministry of women. Two further points need to be made about the Anglican Church's

considerations on the professional ministry of women in the church. The first is to call attention to two other works that were written by Anglicans during this period. The first is by Charles E. Raven and is entitled, Women and the Ministry.¹⁶ The second is Maude A. Royden's, The Church and Women.¹⁷ These works are particularly worthy of note because they represent the best widely read liberal Anglican literature on the subject and because they were persons of unquestionable influence in the whole Anglican debate during these two decades. The second point is that while the number of professional women workers increased in the American branch of the Anglican Communion the amount of theological debate was slight in comparison to what was taking place in England. The Protestant Episcopal Church does not have documents of the calibre and importance of the two Reports of 1919 and 1935.

In the first half of this chapter we have examined Anglican thinking on this subject during the liberal, inter-war period. This literature is particularly significant for Anglicans but it is important for all Christians concerned with the question because it represents a point of view based more heavily on tradition than any other Protestant position. In the second half of the chapter we shall examine representative points of view of the post-war period. As was said early in the chapter, the post-war interest in the position of women in the church, and particularly in the professional ministry and ordination of

women, was generated by the World Council of Churches. In 1948 the World Council of Churches launched the most extensive survey ever made on the subject of women in the church. The reports of this survey provide us with a great deal of factual information. They also provide us with a profile of the various churches' attitudes on the subject. Following the World Council study a great deal of literature appeared by theologians of the various churches in which they tried to investigate the issues from their individual theological perspectives. Consequently, we have entirely too much material to examine in detail. Instead, we shall try to examine representative trends.

Some of the most interesting material for Anglicans involves that controversy in the Church of Sweden over the ordination of women. And unfortunately almost none of it has been translated from Swedish into English. In the scant amount that is translated we find conflict in the analyses of why the Church of Sweden finally approved the ordination of women. One writer insists that the real issue was a conflict in church-state relations¹⁶ while another denies that this was the problem.¹⁷ It is clear from all accounts that there was much public disapproval of the 1957 Church Assembly decision which rejected the proposal to ordain women. Furthermore, the Church Assembly was not at all theologically united on its grounds for rejecting the proposal.¹⁸ I think it fair to say that the final decision of the Church Assembly at Uppsala in 1957 approving the

ordination of women was not the victory of any particular theological position or a victory of the Diet over the Church Assembly. Rather, it was the victory of the long standing liberal, social tradition in Sweden which has distinguished Sweden from other countries for many years.

Anglican writers have continued to produce books and articles on the subject but there has been no composite study of the importance of the Archbishops' Commission Report of 1935. Anglicans have continued to be concerned with the significance of tradition in this issue although they do not by any means agree on what a proper view of tradition is or what tradition dictates in this situation. An example of the kind of disagreement that exists among Anglican writers is Dr. M. E. Thrall¹⁹ and Canon Robert W. Howard.²⁰ Thrall says that the nature of the ministry depends on the gift of the Spirit which is bestowed through the imposition of the hands of the bishop. The validity of ones' ministry depends in no way upon the ability or preparation of the person. Traditionally, the Church has always ordained men only and any change in this practice must come from a study of scripture. Thus he appeals alternately to both scripture and tradition. Howard makes a very different kind of appeal. First, he feels that tradition that is not examined and changed to meet the needs of the time is a yoke.²¹ Second, he feels that the Church is a living organism which must embody the Spirit of Christ. This implies both continuity and change.²²

Third, he feels that the Church has no right to expect service and devotion from women if it is not ready to allow them to use all of their potentialities and gifts to the fullest.²³

This lack of agreement between two Anglican writers is a typical instance of the apparent fact that disagreement on this issue does not necessarily occur only between different churches or denominations but is frequent among members of the same church. We can see this not only from the recent literature produced but also from such composite studies as that of the World Council of Churches and the study document of the Church of Scotland. While some bodies tend toward a liberal approach in theological issues and others tend toward a conservative approach, there are elements of each tendency in most churches. We also find that theologians apparently using the same criteria of judgement come up with different conclusions. The balance between Scripture, tradition, habit of mind, and the pressures of the present situation seems delicate in all cases. Thus the Archbishops' Commission examines the passages in the New Testament that deal with women, dismissing the Pauline passages that favor a patriarchal view of women (I Corinthians 11:2-16; I Corinthians 14:34-35; I Timothy 2:11-15), and putting great stock in passages that support the equality of all persons (Galatians 3:28). Dr. Thrall examined these passages and found them inconclusive. Two Lutheran scholars examined the New Testament material and arrived at two entirely different positions.

Dr. Fritz Zerbst feels that the subjection of women is clearly an important New Testament doctrine which has specific importance for us today.

The Word must be proclaimed. But a woman may proclaim the Word to a congregation of men and women only when it is generally understood that she is doing something which is improper and which puts the men to shame.²⁴

Mr. Russell C. Prohl examined the material and found that the Pauline passages in question referred primarily to the relationship of a married man and woman and that the primary concern of the early Church in these matters was not to offend the pagans with its spiritual democracy and unity in Christ. Thus he favors a more extensive professional ministry of women.²⁵

The Revised Interim Report of a Study of the Life and Work of Women in the Church by the World Council of Churches provides the most concise and direct profile of opinion on the ordination of women and thus bears full quotation. This material was obtained from the survey done by the Committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church in 1948.

A few of the reasons set forth against the ordination of women are:

1. The nature and God-given functions of women preclude their being called to this high office.
2. Specific injunctions such as "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or have authority over man, she is to keep silent."
3. The authority and tradition of the Church have not included the possibility of women serving as clergy.

4. The fact that certain churches consider this a closed issue would make the reunion of the churches more difficult - perhaps impossible.

5. There would be resistance in parishes to having a woman clergyman. In part, this might be because of sex prejudice, and in part because churches of the Reformation have put a high value on the Christian parsonage and the contribution of the pastor's wife. In this connection it would be presumed that most women coming forward for the Ministry would be single women.

6. There would be especially difficult problems for a woman clergyman to face in case she married and had family and home responsibilities.

7. If women should be admitted to the full ministry, it might deter men from answering the call to it.

A few of the viewpoints of those favouring the ordination of women are as follows:

1. Women are now satisfactorily thus serving in some Communion.

2. The problems which they face in the Ministry have been met and largely overcome in other spheres of work.

3. The full ministry of women is required by the Christian doctrine of human nature.

4. "In Christ there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

5. Under the stress of danger and trouble the Church has been thankful to use them to the full.

6. In the present godlessness and indifference to religion throughout the world, the Church needs the joint service and leadership of men and women.

7. In some of the Younger Churches where women missionaries have been relatively free from traditional restrictions, there is a desire for women to serve the Church in the fullest way.²⁶

Each of these points has been hotly debated at various times in the past twenty years, and anyone who wishes to examine the discussions of each point can locate these discussions very easily. All of the books and articles in the bibliography which are specifically concerned with women and the Church will provide ample material for such an examination. Many of them will be discussed and evaluated in the critical summary of this study.

FOOTNOTES

1. Revised Interim Report of a Study on the Life and Work of Women in the Church (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1948), henceforth referred to in footnotes as Revised Interim Report; and Kathleen Bliss, The Service and Status of Women in the Church (London: SCM Press Limited, 1952).

2. The most valuable survey on this whole area is the final book form of the World Council of Churches survey of the Commission of the Life and Work of Women in the Church by Kathleen Bliss, The Service and Status of Women in the Churches (London: SCM Press Limited, 1952).

3. Bliss, p. 90.

4. Report of the Archbishops' Commission, The Ministry of Women (Westminster: The Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 1935), henceforth referred to in footnotes as 1935 Report.

5. Ibid., p. 7.

6. Ibid., p. 7.

7. Ibid., p. 5.

8. Ibid., p. 26.

9. Ibid., p. 27.

10. Ibid., p. 27.

11. Ibid., p. 28.

12. Ibid., p. 28.

13. Ibid., p. 25.

14. Ibid., p. 29.

15. Ibid., p. 30.

16. Sten Rodhe, "More About the Ordination of Women Controversy", Lutheran World, Volume V, Number 4 (March, 1959) pp. 397-403.

17. Per-Orlov Ahern, "The Relationship of State and Church", Lutheran World, Volume X, Number 3 (September, 1961) pp. 191-197.

18. Eric H. Wahlstrom, "Ordination of Women in the Church of Sweden?" Lutheran Quarterly, Volume X, Number 2 (May, 1958) pp. 161-164.
19. M. E. Thrall, The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood, (London: SCM Press, Limited, 1958).
20. Robert W. Howard, Should Women Be Priests? (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949).
21. Ibid., p. 17.
22. Ibid., p. 18.
23. Ibid., pp. 12 and 45.
24. Fritz Zerbst, The Office of Women in the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. 123.
25. Russell C. Prohl, Women in the Church (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957).
26. Revised Interim Report, pp. 39-40.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Thus far in this study we have seen that the attempt to understand the problems that have impeded the development of the professional ministry of women in the church has led us to consider more problems rather than fewer. We have seen that the reasons for the church's uncertainty and neglect of this area of its life are many and complex. And we have seen that all these reasons are centered in areas of the Church's life and thought in which there is deep feeling and often disagreement and uncertainty. This should not surprise us, since in speaking of women we are speaking of half the population of the world, not to mention the Church. And in speaking about the professional ministry we are speaking about the focus of leadership, purpose, and mission of the Church in the world. Furthermore, we are talking about a subject which is larger than mere matters of internal Church polity but which is related to the whole area of women's professional life in the world. Thus far we have presented the subject historically under the two general headings of (1) the position of women in society and (2) theological debate and discussion in the Church. This survey has not been exhaustive by any means, but I believe that I have been careful to indicate the sources for more extensive study by the reader.

The final section of this study will be devoted to dealing specifically with each of the areas of difficulty and disagreement we have encountered thus far. These areas will not be dealt with in equal length and depth since they are not of equal importance in relation to this subject. But we will try to identify each problem and make certain critical remarks and recommendations as to what steps the Church ought to be taking in the future.

I. Sex and Sexuality

The most pervasive and troublesome problem is that of the nature and status of women and relationships between the sexes. As we have noticed, there has been a tendency in the Church and in society to treat women solely on the basis of their sex rather than as persons who are women. A woman has often been thought to be less of a person than a man. A woman's sole purpose and raison d'etre has often been seen as being sexual, reproductive, and supportive to male enterprise. As Simone de Beauvoir has pointed out, this subjection of women has deep roots in the cultural experience and consciousness of Man. She has located the source of this subjection in the ambiguous feelings that men have about the fact that women bear the children. These feelings are both of jealousy, that this opportunity is hers, and of disdain, that her primary work ties her so closely to the functions of her body. The complex cultural relationships between men and women have been studied and analyzed at length in

the past sixty years. And concurrently, social changes have taken place that have disproven many ideas about men and women that had previously been accepted as axiomatic. And what has become more clear than ever is that women are not inferior to men in intelligence or emotional stability, and that to regard women only in terms of animal inferiority is simply to bask in the luxury of blind, male ego. But even in an age when the idea of male superiority is no longer popular there remain the questions, what should the relationship between the sexes be, and what does the phenomenon of sex and sexuality mean in relation to person-hood. And these are the questions that plague our world today, particularly the Western half of it. Men and women are searching to find out what it means to be a male human being or a female human being. The comparatively recent discovery that many characteristics formerly thought to be the exclusive possession of one sex or the other are actually shared in varying proportions by each only makes the search more confusing and difficult. We have also come to realize that many so-called sexual characteristics are, in fact, learned, social conventions. This means that the whole phenomenon of human sexuality is not as clear cut as we had thought.

What does this mean for the future, and particularly what is the task to the Church in this time of search and redefinition? The most important thing that the Church can say is that God created Man to be whole and He has assured him again of his

wholeness and his freedom to be truly human in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We do not need to cling to worn out cliches about the nature of manhood and womanhood in order to preserve our self identity. We do not need to be afraid that science is going to discover something about our sexual nature that is going to be so destructive to our egos that we will not know who we are. We are free to support the most far reaching kind of social and psychological research (excluding the manipulation of human personality in any way) because we know that God's truth is being revealed through it. We know that the development of psychiatry and the social changes of the past hundred years have brought us greater understanding of human love rather than less. And we can be confident that further change and research will bring us more understanding of ourselves as children of God rather than less. This assurance, confidence, and receptivity to new ideas is the first thing that the Church has to offer.

The second thing that the Church has to offer in this situation is its own understanding of human personality and human relationships in Christ as they have been experienced in the life of the Church. She also has theological understanding of these matters in which God's revelation of Himself in the history of Israel and the Church has been clearly and carefully expressed. In using the tools of philosophy, theology can assist to clarify and standardize the meaning of words that pertain to the issue of

sex. Sherwin Bailey gives a good example of this when he insists that "sexual intercourse" does not refer merely to the act of coitus. Rather it refers to all situations and experiences in which men and women meet one another, know one another, and are known.¹ In this sense then, all persons are involved in sexual intercourse. It is a normal and necessary part of healthy living.

It is also increasingly clear that the Church must put itself to the task of constructing a theology of sex. The Church has certainly thought and said a great deal about sex. But usually this thinking has been centered on marriage. The time has come when sex must be thought about theologically in its larger meaning. What does it mean to be a male human being or a female human being? What does this duality of humanity mean in terms of the Doctrine of Man?

Since sexual differentiation is one of the most significant human characteristics, it will be obvious that sex is the proper concern of those studies which have to do with what is generally termed the Doctrine of Man.²

In investigating this aspect of the Doctrine of Man theologians have looked to the Scriptures. But there has been no clear agreement as to just what the Scriptures indicate on this point.³ There has been considerable debate in relation to the creation stories as to the implications of the fact that God created Man in His image and that He created them male and female. Barth maintains that "the relational image of God in its Manward aspect is specifically and exclusively sexual" while Brunner "finds

the image in every I-Thou relation." The fact of the matter is that it is impossible to speak of strictly sexual images or strictly "I-Thou" images. There is no such choice for human beings as sexuality or non-sexuality. Sexuality is the given fact and any attempt to think non-sexually is bound to end in failure or misunderstanding. The question is, rather, what is the meaning of sexuality?

I am convinced that the scriptures can give us no final answer on the nature of sexuality because they are not concerned with this issue as such. The biblical writers were concerned with the relationships of men and women particularly in the context of marriage. And they were primarily concerned with the ethical problems that arose when persons exploited one another and when they failed to treat persons as persons. Thus we cannot look to the Bible for any guidance on the meaning of manhood or womanhood. But this does not mean that we are left with no Christian theological basis for understanding sexuality. It only means that we must look more deeply into the Christian understanding of personhood and to explore more fully what we already know about human relationships. Sherwin Bailey feels that the real nature of sexual differentiation at the profound level will never be fully known by man.

Sexual order may be described as the general form of relation subsisting ontologically between male and female as personal constituents of the dual being, Man. Like sex itself, this order is essentially a divine secret or mystery—something known immediately to God alone;

he has not expressly declared it by revelation, man and woman have no abstract and intuitive comprehension of it, and it cannot be deduced from biological or psychical data about the sexes, or from their established social roles and functions. As with manhood and womanhood, its meaning can only be discovered existentially - that is, through sincere and responsible relationship;.....all that can be said is that despite infinite possibilities of variety due to personal factors, it always remains intrinsically an order of mutual complementation wherein neither sex is subordinate or superordinate to the other.⁵

In view of the present uncertainty about the nature of sexuality it is possible to see why Bailey feels that it is a mystery that will never be known by man. It also seems to be a somewhat defeatist attitude. I am more inclined to think and hope that further thought and free, responsible sexual encounter in the future will deepen our understanding of sexuality.

This, then, is a summary and critical examination of the first problem that is involved in the development of the professional ministry of women. Only when the Church realizes that it shares this problem with the rest of society will there be any hope that women can take their rightful place in the leadership of the Church.

II. Ministry and the Priesthood

The second area of tension and misunderstanding is that of the concept of the ministry and the priesthood. Evidence for this being an area of confusion and tension is not as explicitly apparent as it is in the area of sexuality. But I believe that

there is, indeed, a great deal of question as to just what the ordained ministry is all about. The image of the ideal Protestant Episcopal priest is that he is young, moderately handsome, has an intelligent, attractive wife, and three "average" children. He is a psychiatrist, social worker, intellectual, preacher, pastor, business administrator, and dispenser of the sacraments. In view of such overwhelming expectations the clergyman is bound to feel inadequate. And this feeling of inadequacy and lack of identity makes him hesitant to share his ministry with the laity or with the opposite sex. Just what is the office of priest? What should he be doing and what should he expect his parishioners to be doing? There are all kinds of answers to this question being circulated. He is a man. He is a physician of souls. He is a dispensator of the sacraments. He is the man in the middle. An appeal to definitions in the Constitutions and Canons or "The Preface" to the ordination and consecration services in the Book of Common Prayer only confirms the fact that we do not know the answer and must look it up. If the clergy are so uncertain of their role and specific functions then we can naturally expect uncertainty as to work and function throughout the ranks of the Church.

Aside from the issue as to whether or not women should be ordained, there is no reason why lay people can not be doing many of the things that now burden and divert the priest from his primary function of preaching and administering the sacraments.

Under the present system in which the priest is expected to be an authority in all fields, it is impossible for this "superman" to be creative and energetic in all fields of human endeavor. Some parts of the Church have begun to see the answer, to this problem and consequently to take the laity seriously. Particularly in Holland and Germany the churches have realized that if the ninety-nine percent of the Body of Christ which is laity does not make a relevant and convincing witness to Christ as Lord of all Life then the ordained one percent is virtually useless.⁶ This same realization must spread to the rest of the Church. The Church must realize that Christ's ministry must be carried out by people in all walks of life and that it must be carried out by members of both sexes. Christ's ministry cannot truly be represented by only one half of humanity. In some cases it has been easier to admit that Christ cannot be adequately represented by just one race than it has been to admit that he cannot be adequately represented by just one sex. If God created Man in His own image, and that image is male and female, then a mono-sexual ministry is unthinkable. Women must serve Christ side by side with men in all walks of life: employed outside the church and within it, unordained and ordained. It is my contention that this full ministry will be closer to realization when the concept of ministry is related more realistically to function, work and vocation than it is at the present.

III. Scripture and Tradition

The third problem that has impeded the development of the professional ministry of women in the Church has been theological uncertainty as to the rational for making major changes in the life of the Church. While most of the theological controversy has been directed to the issue of the ordination of women it has been present in all discussions of the place of women in the Church. What has become apparent in this study is that different churches and denominations not only differ in opinion but in the way they reach and maintain their opinions. And these basic methodological and theological presuppositions must be clearly understood before the merits of any positions can be evaluated. At a time when there are so many shades of theological opinion the statement of these presuppositions is imperative.

Because of the inclusion of such a statement of basic theological assumptions, the study document prepared by the Church of Scotland, The Place of Women in the Church, is one of the most valuable pieces written on the subject in the last twenty years. This document is clearly written and it is written from a theological point of view with which most Anglicans would agree. Because of the clarity and theological soundness of this document we shall outline the section on the authority of Scripture below.

1. The authority of Scripture is the authority of its unity as the Word of God.

2. Specific texts cannot be taken as conclusive pronouncements.

3. Biblical situations cannot be imposed as stereotypes on present-day situations.

4. The commands of God are concrete, realistic, and historical.

5. The first question is, is the patriarchal view of women in Scripture part of the time-boundness or timelessness of Scripture?

Many contemporary theologians, and most certainly most Anglicans, would find much evidence for the fact that the patriarchal view of women in Scripture is not peculiar to the Judeo-Christian tradition, and that, in fact, it conflicts with other points of view in Scripture. This is certainly my belief, as has been clear throughout this study. We have seen that larger theological questions may become confused with the particular issue of the ministry of women unless care is taken to keep these two issues explicitly separate. The value of a document prepared in the fashion that The Place of Women in the Church is that this confusion was avoided. This is a most fruitful approach and I endorse it not only for its method but for its position on the authority of Scripture.

The authority of Scripture is not the only theological problem that has arisen in discussions on the professional ministry of women in the Church. For Anglicans and Roman

Catholics (the Orthodox can hardly be said to have discussed the problem) an important issue has been that of tradition. As was apparent in the 1935 Report of the Archbishops' Commission, concern that tradition be maintained was one of the primary reasons for opposing the ordination of women to the priesthood. At that time the Commission said that the ordination of women to the priesthood would constitute a break with the tradition of the Church and that so great a change could^{not} be made alone by one branch of the Catholic Church.

At this juncture it must be recalled that in discussing the professional ministry of women in the Church we have already made two points which must be assumed in this discussion of tradition. The first point is that a full doctrine of Creation insists that God created Man male and female in His image and that men and women together constitute a complete view of human nature. And as such, men and women are equal, though different. The second point is that the patriarchal view of the place of women is not applicable to the place of women in the Church today. Thus, for Anglicans, the final objection to the development of the professional ministry of women in the Church is the reservation that this would constitute a serious break with tradition and that such a break would seriously hinder the Anglican Church's claim to catholicity. This is the position that many Anglican theologians find themselves in. They seem to favor the professional ministry of women on the first two

points but oppose it on the ground of tradition.

Such a view of tradition, particularly in relation to polity, is rigid and constitutes a misunderstanding of the historical Anglican position on the authority of tradition. This more rigid view of tradition is more representative of Anglican theology since the Oxford Movement than it is of the whole spectrum of Anglican theology. In an effort to understand the Anglican position on the authority of tradition more clearly we shall turn to Richard Hooker. Hooker wrote at a time in history when this very issue of tradition was tremendously important. He knew that the continuity of catholicity and the change of reformation were equally important in the life of the Church. He did not try to emphasize one aspect at the expense of the other. It is for this reason that we shall examine his view of continuity and change as they relate to matters of church polity. By doing so we hope to understand the role of tradition in the issue of the professional ministry of women more correctly and creatively than we have in the past.

On the conservative side, Hooker says that tradition has precedent over innovation. His principle is that changes in polity cannot be made irresponsibly or on whim. Those who favor a change must bear the burden of the proof.

That which the Church hath received and held so long for good, that which public approbation hath ratified, must carry the benefit of presumption with it to be accounted meet and convenient. They which have stood up as yesterday to challenge it of defect, must prove their challenge.⁸

On the other hand he is opposed to slavish adherence to tradition and authority that are not ruled by common sense. Reason must be the ultimate judge in all matters. Thus we see that Hooker has a high estimate of man's ability to make wise decisions if he is flexible and creative in doing so.⁹ Furthermore, there must be a clear distinction between matters of the faith and matters of polity. Doctrine is not mutable whereas polity is. The structure of the Church and the functions of its ministry are a means to an end and not the end itself.¹⁰ And the Church has the authority to remove that which has been in the past and to create anew.¹¹ The Church is a living thing which changes and grows organically. And if it is necessary for the maintenance of the faith, the Church can make changes in polity, be they ever so contrary to former councils and decisions.¹² Thus we see that for Hooker tradition is a living thing which guides and directs the Church in its decisions. Tradition is always under the government of reason and it always serves the faith rather than any particular structure or procedure.

With this in mind it becomes apparent that Anglicans cannot legitimately argue against a change in polity on the basis of the immutability of tradition. On this basis it would seem not only permissible to develop the professional ministry of women more fully but it would seem highly advisable. Such a development is desirable because it would represent a step toward recognizing the full doctrine of Man and a whole, mature

theology of sex. The faith would be served by such a change. Tradition cannot be used against change.

This discussion of the role of tradition in the Church concludes this study. It has been apparent throughout the study that the question of the professional ministry of women in the Church is one about which people have strong feelings. It is a question which has many facets and this complexity makes progress slow and uncertain. In an attempt to understand this complexity we have examined the traditional place of women in society, the radical changes of the past one hundred years, and the ambiguous situation of women in society today. In addition to this, we have examined the specifically theological discussions of the ministry of women in an attempt to untangle the theological problems that are preventing the development of this ministry. In the case of each specific theological problem we have indicated the direction that seems most fruitful for future thought and development. It is the fact that these specific problems meet so complexly and ambiguously in this particular issue that makes this issue one that people would rather avoid than meet. But it must be met lest the Church be unnecessarily burdened by irrelevant ideas and deadening tradition.

FOOTNOTES

1. Derrick Sherwin Bailey, The Man-woman Relation in Christian Thought (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd, 1959) p. 262.
2. Ibid., p. 264.
3. Documentation of this disagreement might well involve a study of the history of theology.
4. Bailey, p. 268.
5. Ibid., p. 301.
6. Professional Life as Christian Vocation, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1948).
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